EVENT OVERVIEW

Coinciding with the January 8, 1815 date of the Battle of New Orleans, the National Park Service holds an anniversary commemoration of the battle every January at Chalmette Battlefield, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve. The anniversary commemoration has primarily consisted of a living history encampment on the battlefield during the second weekend in January, but in recent years has also included a wreath-laying ceremony on January 8th and other non-living history activities. This event information guide focuses mainly on the living history encampment. We hope it will provide the information you need and answer most of your questions.

Chalmette Battlefield, one of the most important sites pertaining to the early history of the United States, is located on the Mississippi River about six miles down river from Jackson Square, the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter. The physical address – and mailing address – is 8606 West St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, Louisiana, 70043. Chalmette is an unincorporated community of 30,000 people in St. Bernard Parish. The battlefield is a quiet and peaceful place but it's only a 20-minute drive to the French Quarter and some of the world's best cuisine, best music, and, of course, Bourbon Street!

Living history units representing both British and American forces participate in the encampment, and each "army" sets up a separate camp area on its respective side of the battlefield (see details in "Logistics" section below). On the British side, appropriate units to represent include the 4th, 7th, 21st, 43rd, 44th, 93rd, and 95th Regiments of Foot, the 1st and 5th West India Regiments, the 14th Light Dragoons, and the Royal Artillery, along with sundry representatives of the Royal Navy and the Royal Engineers. On the American side appropriate units include the 7th and 44th Infantry Regiments, Light Artillery Corps, US Marines, US Navy gunners, Baratarian gunners, Free Men of Color, the several units making up Plauche's Battalion, Beale's Rifles, Jugeat's Choctaws, and the Tennessee and Kentucky Militias. These lists are not exhaustive; other impressions can be discussed with park staff.

Emplaced in embrasures in the reconstructed American rampart at the battlefield, the park has two reproduction artillery pieces, both 6-pounders, that artillery crews fire as part of historic weapons demonstration programs. (The bigger iron 12-pounder on the garrison carriage that some of you may remember has been taken out of service for safety reasons.) Otherwise, participants must bring their own arms, tents and all other gear. The park provides black powder, certain meals, and other camp supplies (see details in "Logistics" and "Black Powder and Historic Weapons" sections below).

Above all, the living history event is an **interpretive** program for park visitors. Period authenticity is very important (see "A Word on Historic Authenticity" below), but just as important is telling the story of the battle and its consequences in a compelling way so that visitors understand the "so what?" and the relevance of the battlefield *today*. Please refer to the "Interpretation vs. Information" section below for a discussion on interpretation in the National Park System.

Feel free to share this announcement packet and application with units that may not be on our mailing list. It is also available in PDF format on our website, www.nps.gov/jela/. We encourage and welcome any interested War of 1812-era unit to apply, **but only units that receive confirmation from the park will be allowed to participate in the 189th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.**

SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2004

Wreath Laying Ceremony The day begins with a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the anniversary date of the Battle of New Orleans. Dignitaries from surrounding parishes and the public will be invited to participate. The short ceremony will feature remarks from the park superintendent, a color guard procession, and a wreath laying at the Chalmette monument. The short program will also feature the awarding of prizes for student essay contest winners and the public reading of the 1st place essay.

Thursday School Day dovetails with the wreath laying ceremony in 2004. Thursday School Day was added in 2003 and was limited to 200 middle school (7th and 8th grade) students. In 2004 we will expand the number of middle school students attending on the Thursday School Day. The park hopes that by adding this additional school day, more local students will get to experience the Battle of New Orleans Anniversary Encampment. We urge you to arrange your travel itinerary in order to participate in this educational opportunity if at all possible.

Schools will be visiting the battlefield on Thursday from 9:30 a.m. until approximately 2:00 p.m. The structure of the day will be basically the same as the Friday School Day (see next section below).

The battlefield will be open to the general public all day on Thursday, January 8th (from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.).

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2004

Friday School Day will be for upper elementary students (4th and 5th grades) from surrounding parishes. The first groups will be scheduled to arrive at 9:30 a.m., and we expect the last groups to depart by 3:00 p.m. They will be invited and encouraged to stay as long as they like, with departure times depending on their own school schedules. Most groups will bring sack lunches and eat while on park grounds, in designated areas away from the encampment. In 2002 over 3300 students and teachers participated in the Friday School Day; in 2003 there were over 1700. We anticipate around 2000 students and teachers in 2004.

School groups will explore the battlefield at their own pace and under the leadership of teachers and chaperones following a prescribed tour route. Upon arrival, they will be greeted by uniformed park staff who will give them a brief orientation to the site. Teachers will receive a schedule of events for the day with a map that denotes where all activities are located. **That schedule should include your unit's camp and any programs or activities you do.** For example, if you are demonstrating fascine bundle making, the schedule will state your location and the times of your demonstration programs (a specific time, every hour, every half-hour, on-going, etc.). The attached "Participant Application" has a space for this information. We urge every participating unit to schedule activities that we can list on the day's schedule.

Park education staff are working constantly to improve the anniversary commemoration School Days from year to year. Please share your comments and recommendations with us for consideration in planning for 2005 and beyond. Event evaluation forms will be distributed to unit leaders upon arrival and check-in.

The battlefield will be open to the general public Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Event publicity will encourage general visitors to avoid Saturday's crowds and come Friday afternoon, so be prepared for historic weapons demonstrations and other activities until flag lowering ceremonies at 4:30 p.m.

The Friday Night Social will be held in the Malus-Beauregard House on the battlefield from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. This is a very informal occasion organized and hosted by local New Orleans area living history volunteers especially for the out-of-town folks. They will have more details for you when you arrive, but in the meantime you may want to practice your Regency Period reels, jigs and waltzes. The social is only open to living history participants and park staff, which makes it a relaxed occasion where we can all get to know one another a little better. Since it started a few years ago it has become a very popular part of the encampment weekend.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2004 will be the big day for the general public and a long day for living history participants. There will be a skirmish reenactment (off site) in the morning followed by camp programs and demonstrations (at the battlefield) all day, then an evening lantern tour after dinner.

Morning parade in both camps will be promptly at 9:00 a.m. All participants not involved in the skirmish reenactment are expected to attend.

The skirmish reenactment (representing the Night Battle of December 23, 1814) begins at 10:00 a.m. The St. Bernard Parish Government will sponsor this activity **off site, away from the battlefield,** at Torres Park, about one mile from the battlefield. The parish will provide transportation between the two sites, as well as breakfast at the Government Complex next to Torres Park. The National Park Service is not directly involved in planning or managing this reenactment, but is very excited to have it added to the weekend's schedule. For more information please contact organizer Charles Pecquet at cpecquet@bellsouth.net or (504) 276-9001.

The battlefield encampment will open to the general public at 11:00 a.m. Visitors will be directed to the St. Bernard Parish Government Complex to park their vehicles and transfer to a free shuttle bus for a short five-minute ride to the Battlefield. Shuttle buses will drop visitors at the Welcome Tent. There will be no driving on the Battlefield Road; nor any parking allowed at the Visitor Center Parking Lot. As with School Days, each visitor will receive a detailed schedule of events and a map of the area. Special arrangements will be made for handicapped individuals.

The Lantern Tour – "The Night Before the Battle" - begins at 6:00 p.m. Saturday evening. Consider this the "grand finale" of the anniversary encampment. The Lantern Tour will be organized and presented with the assistance of the battlefield's Civilian Living History Volunteers. The tour follows a route of eight to ten stops – it can vary depending on which units participate – that present short vignettes of scenes that might have taken place on the night of January 7, 1815. No audience interaction is permitted so first person interpretation and even portraying historic figures will be acceptable and encouraged. Historically, on that night no women would have been on the field, especially along the American line, so we ask all women – in period dress – to participate either conducting groups on the tour route or introducing the

vignettes. Every man is needed as well, to fill the camps with life and help create a sense of realism.

Tours will start every ten minutes from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Tickets will be $2 per person (ages 6 and older; 5 and under FREE), sold on a first come, first served basis with no advanced reservations. The revenues from the 2003 Lantern Tour are being used to buy a few tents for the British camp; suggestions are welcome for how to spend 2004 Lantern Tour monies.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11 will be the day we wrap up the 189th Anniversary and start thinking about the 190th! The park will provide a farewell breakfast and then it will be time to break camps and pack up. We ask that all camps be cleared by noon so park staff can get to the job of cleaning up.

LOGISTICS

ARRIVAL, CAMPING AND OTHER LODGING OPTIONS

Participants are welcome to camp on the battlefield in designated areas using period tentage. Several portable toilets will be placed throughout the park convenient to the American line and the British and Civilian camps. PLEASE check with your camp commander before setting up camp (see "Camps and Camp Commanders" below).

We encourage you to arrive Wednesday in order to participate in the Thursday School Day. You may begin to arrive as early as Wednesday morning. Starting Thursday night the main gate on Battlefield Road will be closed but not locked after hours, so you may arrive any time during the night. If you arrive during the day on Thursday or Friday you will be allowed to drive into camp and unload your gear, but then you must move your vehicle to the designated parking area in the cemetery (see "Parking" below).

There is one hotel in St. Bernard Parish, the Econolodge Marina, 5353 Paris Rd. in Chalmette, telephone 504-277-5353. Paris Road is the main highway coming into Chalmette from I-10 and the north (exit 246 on I-10, the Chalmette exit, is I-510, which becomes LA 47, which is Paris Road). The hotel is about a ten-minute drive from the battlefield.

There are hundreds of other hotels, inns and guest houses in New Orleans East, the French Quarter, Downtown New Orleans and beyond.

CAMPS AND CAMP COMMANDERS

The American camp will stretch along Battlefield Road (the main park entrance road) from the monument towards the highway. Units will be allowed to leave a little open space between camps to facilitate dealing with large crowds, but the overall idea is to establish one camp and create the impression of *one army*, albeit made of diverse troops, united against the enemy. The British camp will be on the north side of the Malus-Beauregard House (not the river side) and the British command will use the house as its headquarters. A Civilian camp will be in the area between the river and the Visitor Center. For interpretive purposes we are referring to the civilian area as "the city of New Orleans." This allows for all sorts of non-military activities that would have taken place away from the front line, like blacksmithing, musicians, and the very important contributions of women to the defense of the city: sewing clothing and preparing meals to send down to the troops, rolling bandages and preparing for casualties, and even the Ursuline nuns' continual prayer vigil.

Mr. Tim Pickles and Mr. Steve Abolt have accepted the park's invitations to serve as commanders of the camps, British and American respectively. They have served in these positions at this event for over a decade. They are excited and honored to serve in this capacity again. They will expect that, during hours when the parks is open to visitors, all military participants do their utmost in properly portraying the men of both sides by following military protocol, decorum, and courtesy as laid out in the regulations of each respective army (the regulations in effect at the time of the December 1814-January 1815 New Orleans Campaign). In regards to period military matters, the camp commander has been delegated authority to make the final decision.

Upon arrival, participants should first report to their camp commanders for their camp locations. We ask that your camp be laid out according to the regulations. We know that because of the weather and the lay of the ground some deviations will occur. If you have any questions concerning the layout of your camp please contact your respective camp commander prior to your arrival. It will facilitate the duty of the camp commander if each participating unit lists on the Participant Application the amount of frontage and depth that it will need for its respective camp.

Camp commanders will hold a morning officer's call with each respective unit leader on Friday and Saturday to discuss the day's goals, objectives and duty stations. The times and locations of these meetings will be announced once you arrive.

Success of the event depends on participants being punctual for their assigned duties, demonstrations and programs.

Your camp commander is also your liaison with the park staff. If any problems arise that cannot be solved within the individual unit, participants should bring them to the attention of their camp commander. If a resolution still cannot be found, the camp commander will take the matter to park staff.

BRIDGE AND SENTRY POST

Though the National Park Service does not allow opposing line tacticals, we do attempt to create the feeling of two separate military camps. To this end, armed sentries will be posted by both commanders at the footbridge over the Rodriguez Canal. All participants in period dress wishing to cross the bridge from one camp to the other will be required to present a proper pass. These passes can be obtained at the respective camp headquarters. Sentry duty will be rotated among participating units. All units will be expected to serve their turn. Specific instructions for the guard will be issued by camp commanders prior to the guards posting.

FOOD

Hot and cold drinks will be available for living history participants throughout the event at the Supply Tent on the river side of the Visitor Center.

For lunch on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the park will supply raw meat, vegetables and other ingredients for a stew. We ask that you cook these meals in camp as part of the living history interpretive program.

Dinner Saturday evening, before the Lantern Tour, will be a catered, buffet-style affair of favorite New Orleans dishes.

Sunday breakfast will also be a catered buffet. This is a farewell breakfast to allow participants to concentrate on breaking camp and packing up.

SUPPLIES

In addition to food, the park will provide potable water in gallon jugs, plenty of dry firewood and bedding straw, and candles for use during the Lantern Tour.

Upon request, items for demonstrations can also be provided, like sugar cane for fascines and poles for ladders. Please contact the park to arrange for these or other materials.

Please remember that the park will provide all black powder as well (see "Historic Weapons and Black Powder" section below).

PARKING & SHUTTLES

No vehicles will be allowed to park on the battlefield while the park is open to visitors (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday and 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday). Furthermore, no vehicles will be allowed to park in the Visitor Center parking lot at any time on Thursday, Friday or Saturday. Vehicle parking for volunteer participants – and park staff as well - will be along Military Cemetery Road out of sight from the battlefield and about 1/2 mile away. Two shuttle vans will run continuously, cemetery to battlefield. During the event, "British" will be dropped off where the Shell Road (the road that parallels the base of the levee) meets the Malus-Beauregard sidewalk and "Americans" will be dropped off where the Shell Road meets the Rodriguez Canal sidewalk.

HISTORIC WEAPONS AND BLACK POWDER

We will have an extensive schedule of black powder firing demonstrations featuring small arms in the British Camp and both artillery and small arms in the American camp. **Do not bring black powder to the Battlefield.** The park will provide all black powder in prepared cartridges, whether for musket, rifle or artillery.

A copy of the Chalmette Battlefield Standard Operating Procedure for Historic Weapons and Black Powder Safety containing more details will be provided to confirmed unit leaders. This document and National Park Service guidelines and policies regarding historic weapons and black powder will be the final authority regarding the use of historic weapons during this event. Safety is the primary concern.

For American units, the National Park Service prefers the Von Steuben drill (as modified for safety). Other drills are appropriate for this period, and, at the discretion and with the approval of the Black Powder Safety Officer for the event, individual units when firing and marching as a separate unit may use the War of 1812 period manual to which they are most accustomed. Morning and evening formations in the American camp as well as the mass firing demonstration Saturday afternoon will be conducted according to Smythe's Manual. For British units, the corresponding regulation period musket and rifle drills for infantry and cavalry will be used. Artillery drill will be conducted according to NPS regulations and safety modifications. On the firing line the word of the NPS safety officer is absolute.

Before a unit (or any member thereof) can participate in any firing demonstration, 1) each unit leader must sign the Black Powder Agreement certifying that he or she has read and understood the Black Powder SOP and will comply with it fully, then 2) all firearms must pass a safety inspection, and then 3) the unit must demonstrate its drill to the satisfaction of the Event Black Powder Safety Officer. **Facilities for weapon maintenance and repair are extremely limited on site and there will be no time for training during the event.** If you have any questions about drills, weapons and firing demonstrations please contact the park Black Powder Coordinator well before January (see "Event Organizational Structure" section below for names and numbers).

Edged weapons NPS policy and the Chalmette Battlefield Standard Operating Procedure for Historic Weapons and Black Powder Safety state that edged weapons like swords, knives and bayonets may be drawn and brandished, in a safe and prudent manner, when the bearer and the weapon are behind a barrier in a secure area out of reach of visitors. **At no time may event participants engage in combat with edged weapons or simulated edged weapons without the express permission and consent of the Event Black Powder Safety Officer and park law enforcement staff.** When NOT behind a barrier, however, when out amongst visitors, swords, knives, bayonets and the like may NOT be fully drawn. They may be partially drawn out of the scabbard enough to expose some of the blade for visual inspection for interpretive purposes, but no visitor may touch the blade. Also, when not behind a barrier, bayonets may be fixed on muskets but the muskets must be kept in a vertical position and the bearer must maintain control of the weapon and the bayonet. At no time may muskets be fired with the bayonet fixed.

A FEW WORDS ON HISTORICAL AUTHENTICITY

The reputation of the National Park Service, the Chalmette Battlefield Living History Interpretive Program, and the Battle of New Orleans Anniversary Commemoration depends on every living history participant striving for and maintaining the highest possible degree of historical accuracy and authenticity in period dress and accoutrements, character role portrayals and demonstrations. Furthermore, the reputation of every living history participant at the Chalmette Battlefield event depends on every other participant's dedication to these same high standards. At the battlefield we hold that everyone is responsible for historical authenticity. If you see something on another participant or in camp that is "out of period" then the first course of action should be to find a gentle and tactful way to call attention to it and correct it. Second course of action will be for you to bring the matter to the attention of your camp commander, and third will be for the camp commander to bring it to the attention of park staff. Any determination made by park staff on historical authenticity and appropriateness is final.

During the anniversary encampment at Chalmette Battlefield, historical authenticity standards will be observed and in effect during hours when the park is open to visitors: from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, and Saturday night during the lantern tour from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. All non-period articles will be kept out of sight, in tents with tent flaps closed and tied shut, or covered ***well*** with burlap or blankets or another appropriate material.

The event attempts to recreate a hastily assembled military camp on both sides. Excessive cast iron ware, glassware, pottery, baggage, furniture, and heavy objects are generally not suitable for this impression and should be kept to a reasonable minimum and/or out of sight. Some units, like the Tennessee Militia and the US Regulars, traveled a great distance to get here and of necessity traveled lightly. Other units, like local militia, lived nearby and may have enjoyed some material comforts brought from the city. Try to keep faithful to the impression you are portraying.

Bales of straw should be broken and the straw scattered or piled. Whole or partial bales are out of period, especially if tied with brightly colored nylon cord. Instead of using bales for seating, find and use logs or other things that would have been available here in 1814-15. (Across the levee by the river you will find an abundance of driftwood logs of all sizes and weights.)

Modern cigarettes and cigars should be smoked behind tents (not *in* them) and completely out of sight of the visiting public. Period hand-rolled smoking materials and pipes are acceptable.

INTERPRETATION vs. INFORMATION

What is "interpretation?"

In recent years, the National Park Service has devoted considerable time and effort to this question, to identify what we do as successful interpreters. Interpretation is not simply the communication of facts and information. Although facts are an important part of an interpretive program, they are not enough. Even when done well, a recitation of facts leaves the audience to wonder, "what does it all *mean*?"

Interpretation is the communication of facts and information **in such a way as to develop an appreciation and understanding of the park and its resources and stories.** As interpreters we do this by facilitating connections between our audience and the meanings of the park. At the Chalmette Battlefield, our programs and presentations serve as catalysts for the audience to make connections with the Battle of New Orleans and the men and women involved. Our primary goal is not to provide information, but to provide access to meanings. First we provide accurate and balanced information. (Remember that there are at least two sides to every story, so the information we provide must take into account multiple points of view.) Then we provide a catalyst for the audience to make those connections. Members of the audience should arrive at their own conclusions because ultimately they will understand and appreciate the park and its resources on their own terms.

For example, a short talk during an artillery firing demonstration might include facts on the size of the piece, the material it is made from, effective range, and the firing drill. But, instead, the talk could be about the crew and the teamwork needed to fire the piece, the leadership necessary to run the drill, the unity that came from a well-drilled and well-led team, and the effectiveness in battle of such a unified team. These concepts of teamwork, leadership and unity are *universal concepts* that most everyone can relate to based on their own life experiences. There are many other universal concepts, like fear, suffering, family, patriotism, and pride, to name a few. Using universal concepts is one way to provide a catalyst for the audience to make connections.

For another example, a talk about the Battle of New Orleans would cover the basic facts of the British amphibious movement across Lake Borgne to the Villere plantation, where Keane decided to stop and rest and await reinforcements. But, instead, you could describe the experience for the typical British soldier: the little island where they waited with no tents or food in the cold and rain, then the arduous trip across the lake in the dark and cold wind, then the march through endless marshes of reeds and muck, finally arriving on dry ground in a strange place. Then pose some questions to the audience. "How would *you* have felt? Would you have been tired and hungry? Would your morale have been very high at that point?" Asking questions encourages the audience to think and arrive at their own conclusions. This is another way to provide a catalyst for the audience to make connections.

Interpreters must provide opportunities for the audience to make connections with the meanings of the resource, realizing that all audience members arrive with their unique set of filters. We meet this challenge by learning and understanding as much as possible about 1) the audience and 2) the meanings we want to reveal. Using our skills – and techniques like living history – we craft the message we wish to deliver.

EMERGENCIES

Park Protection Rangers will be in charge of Emergency Services during the event. The most up-to-date information regarding designated first aid stations, emergency contacts and other procedures will be provided closer to the event date.

Camp Commanders will be issued NPS two-way radios and NPS cell phones for 24-hour emergency use during the event.

If someone needs to reach a participant at the battlefield during the event, the Visitor Center telephone number (daytime only) is (504) 281-0510. Nighttime and other emergency telephone numbers, as stated above, will be provided later.

EVENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & CONTACTS

Event Coordinator	Dan Brown	daniel_r_brown@nps.gov (504) 589-3882 x224
Interpretive Program Coordinator	Laura Burke	laura_burke@nps.gov (504) 589-2330 x13
Living History Participant Coordinator	Danny Forbis	danny_forbis@nps.gov (504) 281-0511 x13

Other contacts:

Park Black Powder Coordinator	Ramon Johnson	ramon_johnson@nps.gov (504) 281-0511 x13

BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFO

Few events in the early history of the republic had such immediate impact and such profound long-term consequences as the Battle of New Orleans, and few places are as symbolic and representative of this country's humble beginnings and rise to greatness as the Chalmette Battlefield. News of the American victory at Chalmette over a seemingly superior British force was received as a surprise to many people. But it was also received as proof that the young nation could overcome great obstacles to achieve the unexpected. It was seen as an example of things to come, and indeed it seems to have foreshadowed even greater victories and achievements in the future. As word of this first great military victory swept across the country so did a wave of patriotism and nationalism. Chalmette was a unifying event for Americans in 1815. It was also the beginning of the road to the White House for Andrew Jackson, who, as president in the 1830's, would have some very different ideas about how a government should serve its people. Even after his presidency, throughout the Age of Jacksonian Democracy, the social and political consequences of the victory at New Orleans were still being felt decades after that foggy morning in 1815. They are still being felt today.

For the British, the final Battle of New Orleans on January 8 was the culmination of a campaign marked by mistakes and failures. It was frustrating for most, humiliating for some. For those British regiments involved, it was a rare defeat in their otherwise glorious regimental histories. Soon the bad fortunes of New Orleans were overshadowed by great British victories at Waterloo and elsewhere. Nonetheless, in its immediate aftermath the Battle of New Orleans was horrible for the British. Chalmette was the site of a great tragedy, the shocking loss of many British lives. Hundreds of common soldiers, young men and family men, the backbone of the British army, died here, but so too did some of the more promising officers serving His Majesty, like Packenham, Gibbs and Dale.

Try as we may to avoid the complicated issue of why the War of 1812 started, visitors will undoubtedly ask the question. The Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812 have their origins in the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. The United States was caught up in this conflict between France and Great Britain, trying to maintain neutral rights and a very profitable trade with both sides. But neither side wanted the United States to carry on unimpeded neutral trade with the other and tried to interfere. The British even occasionally boarded American ships and impressed American seamen into the Royal Navy. But to limit the explanation to just these causes, however, is to oversimplify the story. As Tim Pickles says, "[w]hatever the War of 1812 was about, it was not about any of the oft-trumpeted causes: 'Free trade and sailors' rights,' or 'The second war for American Independence.'"[1] It is true that President Madison's War Message of June 1, 1812 enumerated these very issues of "free trade" – the Orders in Council, British blockades and the carrying trade – and "sailors' rights" – impressment. These *were* important issues to most Americans. Western and Southern farmers blamed falling commodity prices on British blockades that blocked access to European markets. But anti-war sentiment in New England – where one would expect these maritime issues to be most important – seem to betray Madison's justifications. Something else was going on. Madison also mentioned renewed hostilities with American Indians along the western frontiers and British "influence" among those Indians. To many, this was an important issue too. "National honor" was a noble issue argued by some War Hawks, as were less noble reasons like the "Land Hunger Theory"

[1] Tim Pickles, *New Orleans 1815, Andrew Jackson Crushes the British* (Oxford, 1993), p. 7.

and the "desire for Canadian land."[2] *The Causes of the War of 1812*, edited by Bradford Perkins, is a collection of essays that discuss in detail most of these issues. The debate over the causes of the War of 1812 goes on, and is sure to flare up heatedly as the bicentennial of the war in 2012 approaches.

Congress declared war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The campaign season of 1812, in general terms, saw success for the United States at sea but humiliation and defeat on land (Hull's surrender at Detroit, the "massacre" at the River Raisin, and failed attacks across Niagara River and towards Montreal). The campaigns of the 1813 season were not as successful on the seas but more successful inland (the burning of York, then Perry's victory on Lake Erie that changed the balance of power in the west, which set the stage for the American victory at the River Thames). In the south, meanwhile, a civil war among the Creek Nation escalated into the Creek War in 1813. In March 1814, at the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River, victory by Andrew Jackson, his Tennessee Militia, the 39th Infantry, and Creek allies effectively ended the resistance of the hostile Red Stick faction of the Creeks.

During these first two years of the war the British had been more focused on events in Europe. British armies and their allies had been quite busy fighting Napoleon and his armies all over Europe. The British had not been able to commit many resources to the "North American War" across the Atlantic. In Europe, however, the tide had turned against Napoleon. His campaign against Moscow in 1812 had ended in retreat and rout, and after being defeated at Leipzig in October, 1813 he had retreated all the way back to France. In March 1814 allied armies entered Paris and in April Napoleon abdicated and went into exile in Elba. The British were free to focus entirely on the North American War.

They made plans to launch three major offensives against the United States in 1814, three attacks against the three most important port cities of the country. The first target, the largest city and the most important port, was New York. In late August 1814 a British army of 10,000 troops crossed from Canada into upper New York State. They advanced about 20 miles, as far as the Saranac River, where they halted to await support from a British fleet on Lake Champlain. In early September that fleet was defeated near Plattsburgh. The British land force retreated back to Canada and so ended the New York Campaign of 1814. It was seen as disgraceful by British and Canadians.

The second planned campaign was the Chesapeake Campaign. It was also in late August (concurrent with the advance into New York) that a force of 4500 British troops landed in Maryland, near Benedict on the Patuxent River, and began the 40-mile march towards Washington. At Bladensburg, on the outskirts of the capital, 7000 US troops were waiting at the crossing of the Anacostia River. The troops were poorly positioned and had to retreat. The retreat turned into a rout and the British continued into Washington. They set fire to many government buildings and then withdrew the next day, reembarking and sailing around to Baltimore.

By early September another force of 4500, many of the same troops that had just occupied Washington, landed at North Point and began the ten-mile march to Baltimore. They advanced to the city's defenses and stopped to wait for the British navy to bombard the city into

[2] Bradford Perkins, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (New York, 1962).

submission and surrender. All night on September 13 – 14 the British bombarded Fort McHenry with over 1500 rounds, but damage was minimal and the fort did not surrender. The land force decided to withdraw and the Battle of Baltimore and the Chesapeake Campaign ended.

The British turned their attention south to their third target: the Gulf Coast; Mobile; New Orleans. They expected an easy victory achievable with just a few thousand of their own troops joined by Indians, Spaniards, African-American slaves, and the creole people of Louisiana. Their plan was to attack Mobile and from there march on to New Orleans.

As a reward for his success in the Creek War and especially his victory at Horseshoe Bend, Andrew Jackson had been appointed Major General in the US Army in command of the Seventh Military District, comprised of the states of Tennessee and Louisiana and the Mississippi Territory (modern Mississippi and Alabama). He had heard rumors and reports of a British plan to attack Mobile, so in late August, he headed there. Arriving in Mobile, Jackson ordered that Fort Bowyer (at Mobile Point on the barrier islands) be strengthened. Within two weeks a force of British and Indians attacked the fort, but failed to take it. Jackson pursued the small enemy force back to Pensacola, capital of West Florida, Spanish territory being used as a base by the British. He demanded that the Spanish governor surrender, but, refusing to do so, the American force attacked and occupied the city. The next day the British evacuated, but not before blowing up the main fort. Jackson had other fortifications around Pensacola destroyed, and then withdrew back to Mobile.

Much has been said about this audacious and illegal operation by Jackson, but it may have saved New Orleans. Left unfortified, Pensacola was useless to the British as a base of operations to attack Mobile and New Orleans. They had to completely change their plans. They were forced to attack New Orleans directly from the sea.

On November 24 the British invasionary fleet left Jamaica headed for the Gulf Coast of the United States. It was a combination of forces from the Chesapeake Campaign plus troops from the European theater. The fleet arrived off the Mississippi Gulf Islands on December 7 or 8.

Jackson, meanwhile, had arrived in New Orleans on December 1. Immediately he began assessing the defenses of the city and preparing for an enemy attack. He visited Fort St. Phillip, 80 miles downriver near the mouth of the Mississippi, and ordered various improvements. He stationed the local militia units of Plauche's Battalion and the Free Men of Color at other expected approaches to the city: Fort Petit Cocquille on the Rigolets (the pass from the Gulf and Lake Borgne into Lake Pontchartrain), Fort St. John on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain just 4 miles north of the city, and on the Chef Menteur Road approaching the city from the northeast. He also stationed five small gunships on Lake Borgne to patrol the water approaches to the Rigolets.

Contrary to Jackson's expectations, the British had decided upon an approach route across Lake Borgne and through the swamps as the best way into New Orleans. By December 12 a large fleet of British barges and service boats was rowing into Lake Borgne towards the American gunboats. Overnight the wind died and the American ships, unable to maneuver, lost the advantage of drawing the enemy into the fire of Fort Petit Cocquille. On the 13th the British captured one US ship and then on the 14th they resumed their pursuit. By sheer numbers they overwhelmed the Americans and took the ships and sailors captive. The loss was devastating for

Jackson because he lost his eyes on the lakes. Furthermore, the lakes were now open to enemy navigation. Just when things might have looked hopeless, though, more troops arrived to reinforce Jackson's numbers. Major General William Carroll, who had succeeded Jackson as major general of the Tennessee Militia, arrived in the city with 3000 men. They were joined as well by General Coffee and his Tennessee cavalrymen, moving in from Baton Rouge.

With control of the lakes, the British disembarked their troops onto Pea Island in Lake Borgne. This operation took five days, during which, without tents or shelter, they endured rain and freezing temperatures. Then the troops were ferried across Lake Borgne about 40 miles to Bayou Bienvenue, then through the winding waterways of the marshland and swamp, emerging on dry land at the rear edge of the Villere Plantation, about nine miles downriver from New Orleans. It was the morning of December 23rd. They marched about a mile and halted – they had reports of 20,000 American troops – and set up camp and headquarters in the Villere house. Their goal, New Orleans, was just a short march away.

By early afternoon Jackson, in his headquarters at 106 Royal Street, received news that the enemy had arrived. He immediately declared that "they shall not sleep on our soil tonight" and issued orders for his troops to prepare to march. By 5 p.m. the Americans were in position on the de la Ronde family plantation next door to the British at Villere. It was almost dark. At 7:30, as predetermined, the *USS Carolina*, which had drifted downriver, opened fire on the British camp and the so-called "Night Battle" of December 23 began. The American troops on land advanced, but after the initial surprise, the British regrouped and rallied to regain their original line. A thick fog rolled in off the river and in the confusion Jackson called off the fighting and withdrew to his original line. The British claimed it as a victory but in some respects it was really a victory for the Americans. The surprise attack stopped the British advance in its tracks and paralyzed them for several days. And Jackson's inexperienced troops were now veterans. There were a few other surprises for the British. It was not going to be an

New Orleans in the Fall of 1814

New Orleans was a blend of cultures and languages. There were Creoles, descended from the original French settlers, who were strongly Bonapartist and hated the British. There were Spanish and Portuguese. There were newly arrived refugees from St. Domingue - French speaking, white, mulatto, slave. They reinforced the Gallic segment of the population just as thousands of Americans - protestant, English speaking, progressive minded - were also immigrating from eastern states. Rachel Jackson herself called it a "Great Babylon" and "wicked."

The years after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had brought drastic change. New Orleans was growing into the metropolis of the west. River trade had brought commerce, growth and prosperity. Population was increasing rapidly. It was the beginning of the Golden Age of New Orleans. But no one knew that in 1814. War had brought a step decline in the commerce of the city. Raw sugar and bales of cotton sat on wharves awaiting export. People had heard the rumors of an enemy attack and feared the looting and plunder it would bring. The future was anything but certain.

easy victory, and instead of a warm welcome from a local population ready to join them, they found deserted homes and farms and "every appearance of hostility."[3]

On the next morning, December 24, Jackson pulled his army back two miles and set up a defensive line at the old Rodriguez Canal that ran the boundary between the Chalmet family plantation on the downriver side and the McCarty family plantation above. Over the next several days soldiers and slaves from the city dug out the canal – about 12 feet wide and four feet deep – and on the upriver side built up an earthwork that stretched from the river's edge back to the swamp, a distance of about 3/4 mile. Logs and fence posts held back the mud and eventually, after about a week, this rampart - which came to be known as Line Jackson - was about seven or eight feet high from the bottom of the ditch before it. Jackson had artillery emplaced in batteries along his line, and moved his headquarters from the city down to the McCarty house, about 100 yards behind the line.

By December 24 the British had finished ferrying their troops ashore at the Villere farm. On December 25 the new commander, General Sir Edward Michael Packenham, arrived with about 3000 additional troops. Packenham was not pleased with the British position and situation; to him it seemed a bottleneck between the river to his left and the swamp to his right. He considered withdrawing but his officers advised against it. They remembered the retreat of the militia at Bladensburg and expected similar behavior here at New Orleans. They had no respect for the Americans, especially the dirty shirt militia, a bunch of rabbit hunters not worthy of being called an army!

On the morning of December 28 Packenham ordered a general advance on the American line, what some historians have called a "Reconnaissance-In-Force." At 600 yards the Americans opened fire, as did the *Carolina* on the river. Caught in the crossfire, the British were surrounded by explosions and carnage. They fired their now-famous Congreve rockets but to little effect. Packenham called off the advance, unaware that his column on the far left was in a position to possibly turn the American flank and win the day. Instead, the shame of retreat demoralized the British troops.

Now the British realized it was not going to be easy to overcome Jackson's defensive line. They decided to treat it just like a traditional fortification or city wall and set up siege batteries to reduce it. Packenham ordered that 30 pieces of the largest artillery available from the fleet be brought ashore. By New Year's Eve they had 14 large guns for which they were constructing earthen batteries within 300 yards of the American line.

New Year's Eve, 1814. In the American camp there was music and morale was high. Remini writes that the Tennesseeans especially were having "great fun" tormenting the enemy at night. "How different the British camp." There were no tents, no music, and little food. The weather was cold and damp and the general mood was gloomy.[4]

At about 10 a.m. on New Year's Day, January 1, 1815, the British started bombarding the American line. The Americans had to scramble into position but after a while began their

[3] George R. Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans* (London, 1827), pp. 307-8, as quoted in Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson and America's First Military Victory* (New York, 1999), p. 81.
[4] Remini, p. 104-5.

counter-attack. For two hours the two sides fired at each other, but by noon the British fire began to slacken and by 3 p.m. all guns were silent. As the smoke cleared it became evident that the British had suffered many casualties. British guns were damaged, smashed and dismounted. The American rampart, on the other hand, remained completely intact with little damage. And there were few American casualties. The British gunners had not taken the time to find the proper range and most of their shots sailed over the heads of the Americans and landed in open fields behind the line. For the proud British Artillery Service it was "a total disaster" and "a monumental defeat." Morale among the British dropped even more.

Packenham reevaluated his situation and came up with yet another plan, this time a bold two-pronged attack on both sides of the river. 1400 men ferried across the river would advance and take the weak line and gun battery still under construction on the West Bank, then turn those guns to enfilade the Americans behind Line Jackson. At that time the attack on the main line would advance in two prongs, one along the river (the British left) and one by the swamp (the British right). Packenham had over 5000 men on the line, plus sailors, engineers and the West Bank force - altogether at least 8000 men ready to take New Orleans. Jackson had about 4000 men, including those in reserve.[5]

By the night of January 7 the transport of troops to the West Bank was supposed to begin, but there were problems and delays. These troops were supposed to march upriver quickly to capture the American guns and turn them against the Americans, at which point Packenham would charge the main line. In the end only about 400 men of the intended 1400 made it across, and by the time they arrived on the West Bank the battle on the East Bank had already begun.

There were delays on the East Bank as well. Fascines and ladders were to be carried ahead of the main advance to facilitate the crossing of the ditch, but this task was not accomplished. Remini says, "the attack should have been aborted right then and there."[6] But Packenham knew that morale was low, the confidence of his men in their officers was low, and he knew that any postponement of the attack would only further lower morale and confidence. Even though the force on the West Bank had not yet captured and turned the American guns, a critical part of the overall plan, he gave the order and the rocket went up to signal the beginning of the attack. At first the attack seemed to go well as the British pushed any advance American troops back to the line. As the early morning fog lifted and the Americans could see the great army marching towards them they broke out into cheers. Finally the orders went out to open fire and soon the whole field was a constant rolling thunder of cannon, musket and rifle fire. The British were mowed down by the hundreds. Entire files and sections of the advance fell to the ground. For brief periods a column would halt, only to reform and start forward again. Then the British troops refused to go any more. Packenham was with the advance on the right, urging his men onward, when he was hit and mortally wounded. He was carried to the rear. Then Gibbs, second in command and leading the attack along the swamp, was killed. Leading the attack along the river, Keane was mortally wounded as well. Just before his death Packenham sent an order to Lambert to take command and bring up the reserves, but the messenger was killed and the order never delivered. The reserve only covered the retreat of the other two brigades.

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[5] These numbers are from Remini, pp. 130-31, and he does not cite his source. Other authors and other sources have given significantly different numbers for troops on both sides. If a living history interpreter chooses to quote other numbers, he or she should simply be prepared to cite his or her source(s).

[6] Remini, p. 140.

After barely two hours the British guns were silent. The Americans ceased fire and as the fog and smoke cleared they peered out over a scene of death and suffering. They described the plantation fields of the Chalmet family as a "sea of red," covered with British red coats, in some places lying two and three men deep. American casualties for that morning were only thirteen; British casualties numbered over 2000.

By the next day, January 9, the British had called a truce and were gathering their wounded and burying their dead. They decided to withdraw from these lands below the city and reembark on their ships. It was a careful and discreet withdrawal that took nine days to prepare. On January 18 the British slipped out of camp under cover of a thick fog, and on January 27 their fleet sailed away.

FURTHER READING

Following are some of the more popular books on the War of 1812 and the Battle of New Orleans that should be available in better libraries around the USA and Canada.

Coles, Harry L., *The War of 1812.* Chicago, 1965.

Hickey, Donald R., *War of 1812, A Forgotten Conflict.* Urbana, Illinois, 1989.

Owsley, Frank Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans*. Gainesville, Florida, 1981.

Perkins, Bradford, editor, *The Causes of the War of 1812*. New York, 1962.

Pickles, Tim, *New Orleans 1815, Andrew Jackson Crushes the British*. Oxford, 1993.

Reilly, Robin, *The British at the Gates, The New Orleans Campaign in the War of 1812*. New York, 1974.

Remini, Robert V., *The Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson and America's First Military Victory*. New York, 1999.

Participant Application

189th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans

Unit Name _____

Number of members participating _____

Description of Impression (Please describe in some detail the overall impression and/or the individual impressions of your unit. You should also demonstrate some knowledge of your unit's roles in the Battle of New Orleans and describe how your participation can enhance the overall interpretation of the event. If you need more space, use the back or attach an extra sheet of paper.)

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Unit Leader / Contact Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

telephone (home) _____ (work) _____ (cell) _____

email address _____

If any members will bring historic firearms, please tell us about your drill, weapons, and the kinds of demonstration programs you like to do.

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Do you intend to participate in the Thursday School Day? YES / NO

Do you intend to participate in the Friday School Day? YES / NO

Please describe the activities and demonstrations the school groups can expect to see in your camp area.

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Do you intend to participate in the Saturday night Lantern Tour? YES / NO

Can any women members please act as guides, escorts or speakers during the lantern tour? YES / NO

Do any members want to schedule and present a short individual interpretive program or demonstration during the main event on Saturday? Please describe. (The park encourages those that play musical instruments or that like to demonstrate any other period craft or skill, military or otherwise, to consider presenting a short program.)

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Please return the completed application and return it to us by **September 1, 2003.**
We have attached a pre-addressed and pre-stamped envelope for your convenience.
Or fax it to (504) 281-0515.

Feel free to share this announcement packet and application with units that may not be on our mailing list. It is also available in PDF format on our website, www.nps.gov/jela/. We encourage and welcome any interested War of 1812-era unit to apply, **but only units that receive confirmation from the park will be allowed to participate in the 189th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.**

Questions? Contact Park Ranger Danny Forbis at (504) 281-0511 x13 or danny_forbis@nps.gov